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SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

Previous Question

With Regard to

RELIGION;

WHEREIN

Several Objections made to the *Previous Question* are examin'd:

AND

In which GOD's *Moral Character* is more fully vindicated.

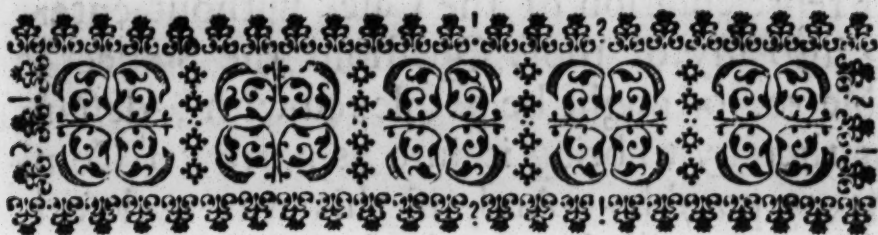
In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

By THOMAS CHUBB.

L O N D O N :

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A
 SUPPLEMENT
 TO THE
 Previous Question.

S I R,



TAKE it very kindly that you would inform me of what has been urg'd to you by way of Objection to my *Previous Question*. For, tho I cannot but think my self in the right, the contrary Supposition implying in it a plain Contradiction; yet, seeing Error is what all Men are liable to, and seeing my Mind may possibly be bias'd by some unseen Prejudice in its favour; therefore I cannot but think it proper to examine with Care and Freedom whatever is offer'd against any Opinion I embrace or maintain.

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IN the Pamphlet refer'd to, I only gave a fair representation of the Case, without entering into any of those Questions the Subject is liable to, or might be perplexed with ; designing thereby to bring it into as narrow a Compass as possible. And, if this was a defect, I hope it will be supply'd in the following Lines, in which I shall examine what the Gentleman (your Friend) has been pleas'd to urge against it.

THE Sum of what is objected, may (if I understand it aright) be reduced to the two following Propositions.

PROPOSITION I.

The God does in some Instances act from or according to the moral Fitness of Things, yet he does not always do so ; that is, he sometimes acts arbitrarily.

PROPOSITION II.

The true Religion, or that which is the ground of divine Acceptance, does consist in doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things ; yet it does not consist in this alone, but also in our complying with those Forms of Worship which are of divine Institution. So that, tho we do the former ; yet we shall not be accepted of God, unless we perform the latter.

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BEFORE I proceed, I beg leave to observe, that, in order to judge aright of the moral Fitness or Unfitness of any Action, every *Circumstance* and *Consequence*, which stands *related* to it, must be taken into the Case: because the Fitness or Unfitness of any Action arises from the *good* or *bad* Purposes it is *subservient* to; and these oftentimes arise from the *different* Circumstances the Action is perform'd under. So that the same Action may be morally *fit* under some Circumstances, and *unfit* under others. And from hence it is, that in some Cases we, not being *appriz'd* of the Circumstances that attend an Action or the Consequences which follow it, judge the Action fit at the *Performance*, and afterwards are convinc'd of the *contrary*. Again,

I OBSERVE, that, at the Conclusion of my *previous Question*, I made the following Remark: "Note, when I say, it will not be allow'd that God acts arbitrarily, my meaning is, that he will not act thus in all those Cases, in which the moral Fitness of things *can* be a *Rule* to him. As to all other Cases, he must act arbitrarily if he acts at all; because the Fitness of things does not come into the Question."

THESE things being premised, I proceed to consider,

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PROPOSITION I.

Tho God does in some Instances act from or according to the moral Fitness of Things, yet he does not always do so; that is, he sometimes acts arbitrarily.

WITH regard to this Proposition, I shall *first* examine the Proposition itself: And, *secondly*, what the Gentleman has offer'd for the Proof of it. And,

FIRST, with regard to the Proposition itself, I observe, that, whereas it saith God sometimes acts arbitrarily, the meaning of this must be, as it is urged by way of Objection to what I have laid down, that he acts thus in some Instances in which the moral Fitness of things *can* be a *Rule* to him; and, consequently, if he made the moral Fitness of things a Rule to him in those Instances, he would act *otherwise*. I say, this must be the meaning of the Proposition, as it is urged by way of Objection against me; because to urge, that God acts arbitrarily in such Instances in which the moral Fitness of things *cannot* be a *Rule* to him, is to urge that against which I have not *opposed* any thing; and consequently, is wholly *foreign* to the present Question.

SO that the obvious meaning of the Proposition is this, namely, That tho God does
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in *some* Instances act *from* or *according* to the *moral Fitness* of things, yet he sometimes acts *contrary* to it; which in other words is the same as to say, that in *some* Instances God's *Actions* are *morally evil*. The Sense of the Proposition being settled, *viz.* that God sometimes makes the *moral Fitness* of things the Rule and Measure of his Actions, and sometimes acts *contrary* to it, I now proceed to shew that it is erroneous. And,

FIRST, tho it could be made appear that God *does* in *Fact* sometimes do what is *right* and *fit* in the Nature of things, and that sometimes he acts *otherwise*; yet it would not follow, that the *Fitness* of things was a *Rule* to him; that is, that it was the *Ground* or *Reason* of his acting in *any* Case: because he might act from capricious Humour, as well in those Instances in which he acts *right*, as in those in which he acts *wrong*. Like the unjust Judge in the Gospel, who, tho he neither *feared* God nor *regarded* Man, yet he would do the Widow *Justice* that required it, lest, by her continual coming, she should weary him. He would do a *right* Action, tho it were from a *wrong* Motive or Principle. Again,

SECONDLY, if God makes the *moral Fitness* of things a Rule to him in *some* Instances, (which is allow'd in the Proposition) then he will do it in *every* Instance, in which that *Fitness* *can* be a Rule to him. And the
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Reason of this is evident, namely, that as the moral Fitness of things is in its *own Nature* truly excellent and valuable, and highly *preferable* to capricious Humour and arbitrary Pleasure; and, as God knows full well wherein the Fitness and Valuableness of every Action lies; and, as he cannot possibly be under any *Temptation* to act *wrong*: so this will always be a *Reason*, arising from the *Nature* of things, for God to prefer a *rational* Conduct before *Arbitrary Pleasure*, and to direct his *Actions* accordingly.

IT is true, that Man, tho he is qualified to discern and judge betwixt *good* and *evil*, yet, notwithstanding this, he sometimes acts *right* and sometimes *wrong*. And the Reason of this is likewise evident, namely, that as Man is a compounded Creature, consisting partly of *Understanding*, partly of *Appetite*, of *Affection*, &c. and as each part of his Composition affords a distinct kind of *Motive* or *Excitement* to Action: so he sometimes acts from one Motive, and sometimes from another. And this gives occasion for his *mixed Character*, viz. that he sometimes acts *right*, and sometimes otherwise; he sometimes follows *Reason*, and sometimes acts *against it*. But this cannot be the Case with respect to God, who, as he knows the moral Difference in things, so he has no *Self-interest* nor *vitiating Affection* to mislead him (which is generally the Case with respect to Men)

And,

And, therefore, he will, not only in *some* Instances, but in *every* Case do what is right and fit in the Nature of Things. Having thus shewn that the Proposition is erroneous; I now proceed,

SECONDLY, to examine what the Gentleman has offered to support it.

IN my *Previous Question* I brought two Arguments to prove, that God always makes the moral Fitness of Things, and not arbitrary Pleasure, the Rule and Measure of his Actions. And I do not understand, that the Gentleman attempted to shew the *weakness* and *inconclusiveness* of those Arguments; but only, in opposition to them, he urged an Argument drawn from *Fact*, by producing two Instances, *viz.* the *prohibiting Adam and Eve to eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, and the *prohibiting the Use of Swines-flesh to the Israelites*: which Instances he urg'd as a *Proof*, that God *sometimes* acts Arbitrarily. And here I observe;

THAT it is supposed, as these Instances are urged against me, that it was really *wrong* in the *Nature of Things* for God to make those Prohibitions. And indeed I grant it would be so; supposing the Things prohibited were *proper* and *useful*, and that *no ill Consequence* attended the Enjoyment of them: because here is a Reason for, but no Reason against that Enjoyment. But this does not appear to be the

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Case ; and therefore the contrary ought rather to be presumed.

AS to the first Instance ; tho the prohibited Fruit might be *proper Food* for the *Serpent*, yet it might be *otherwise* to *Man*. For, tho it was agreeable to the Senses, and gave a briskness to the Spirits ; yet the taking plentifully of that Fruit might tend to the *Hurt* and *Dissolution* of the human Composition. And, supposing this to be the Case, then here is a Reason for the Prohibition ; and consequently this is not an Instance of Arbitrary Pleasure.

HERE is a Reason for the Prohibition, namely, because this Fruit was prejudicial and hurtful to Mankind, *In the Day thou eatest thereof thou shalt* (or thou wilt) *surely die* (or contribute to thy Death.)

AS to the second Instance, namely, *the prohibiting the Use of Swines-flesh to the Jews* : this I think likewise falls short of Proof, as in the former Case. For, tho Swines-flesh might be *proper Food* in *one Climate* ; yet it might be very *hurtful* in *another* : And this might possibly be the Case with respect to the Land of *Canaan*. The taking plentifully of that Food might introduce the *Leprosy* or some other Disorder very *afflictive* or *disagreeable* to Mankind. And, if this was the Case, then here is a Reason arising from the Nature of Things for the Prohibition ; and consequently this is not an Instance of Arbitrary Pleasure.

IF

IF it should be urged; that these are mere Suppositions, which have no Foundation in the History.

I ANSWER: allowing them to be such; yet, if God governs himself by the moral Fitness of Things in his Dealings with his Creatures (which I think I have proved that he does,) then *these*, or something *like these*, must be the Case.

IF any should yet insist; that these are Instances of Arbitrary Pleasure.

I ANSWER: this is begging the Question; and, if these Prohibitions are allow'd to be *Divine*, then there is a *moral* Certainty of the Contrary. Besides, whoever thus insists, I think it will lie upon him to prove (upon the foot of God's acting Arbitrarily) that the foremention'd *Prohibitions* are *Divine*; which I think cannot be done, as I have shewn in my *Previous Question* (Observation the 3d) and which I now come more particularly to consider. And,

Tho' all Religions which are founded on Revelation stand upon a foot in this Case; yet, seeing the supposed Instances of arbitrary Pleasure, which are urged against me, are taken from the *Jewish Revelation*; therefore I shall make the *Divinity* of that Revelation the Subject of my present Inquiry. And,

LEST my Opponents should fall under any *Difficulty* with regard to the *Historian*; the *transmitting* the *History*; or the *Facts* re-

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LEST my Opponents should fall under any *Difficulty* with regard to the *Historian*; the *transmitting* the *History*; or the *Facts* re-

corded in it: I shall, in favour of them, give them leave to take for granted that *Moses* was the Writer of all the Books which are commonly ascribed to him; that those Books have been truly transmitted to us without Corruption; and that the Facts, (*viz.* the turning a Rod into a Serpent, Water into Blood and the like) were real as they are recorded. And farther, that those Facts were *supernatural*; that is, they were above the *natural* Ability or *inherent* Power of Man to perform; and consequently, that they were performed by the Agency or Co-operation of an *invisible* Being.

THIS being the state of the Case; the Question will be, whether this *Revelation* and that *Law*, of which *Moses* is allow'd to be the Promulger, is Divine; seeing the supernatural Operations abovemention'd were wrought to prove it to be such. And,

THE true Answer to this Question will be, that this is perfectly *uncertain* upon the *present Supposition*; because God *may* act Arbitrarily in this Instance, as well as in any other Case; for any thing we *know*, or can *shew* to the *contrary*. That is, tho' those supernatural Operations were wrought to prove what *Moses* declared to be true; yet, notwithstanding this, *Moses* might be but an *Impostor*: because God might, in this Case, as an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure, either use his *own* Power, or permit some other invisible Agent to exert *such* Power,

Power, for the *Confirmation* of this *Imposition*. I say, this *may* be the Case, for any thing we know. For, as God is here supposed *sometimes* to act Arbitrarily; so this may be *such* an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure; seeing we have no *Rule* by which we can judge *when he acts thus, and when he acts otherwise*.

IF it should be urged; that such a Conduct, *viz.* the using of his Power, or the suffering other invisible Agents to use theirs, for the Confirmation of a Lye, in a matter of such Importance, is inconsistent with God's moral Perfections.

I ANSWER; so is every other Instance of arbitrary Pleasure. And therefore, if an Argument drawn from God's *moral* Perfections is *conclusive* in *one* Case, it must be so in *every* Case: and, if such an Argument is *inconclusive* in *one* Instance, it will be so in *every* Instance. And from hence I think it plainly appears, what a *precarious* Foot the *Divinity* of every Religion stands upon, which is built upon *Revelation*; supposing God acts Arbitrarily, as aforesaid: because from hence it evidently appears *impossible*, in the Nature of Things, to prove any Revelation to be *Divine* upon *this Principle*.

Besides, supposing we could be able to prove a Revelation to be Divine upon the present Supposition; yet still we should be in a very *evil* Case; because God might, as an Instance of his arbitrary Pleasure, actually *deceive* us
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himself; as well as leave us in the Hands of other *Deceivers*. And this leads me to ask of those Men (who maintain that God *sometimes* acts Arbitrarily) how they can *certainly* know, what will *please* God, and what are the *sure* Grounds upon which they build their *Trust* and *Confidence* in him.

I F they say, that divine Revelation is the *Rule* of their Actions, and the *Ground* of their Confidence: alas! this, in Consequence of their own Principles, is like that broken Reed *Egypt* (if I may be allow'd to use the Prophet's Expression) upon which, if a Man lean, it may disappoint his Trust. For, if God sometimes acts Arbitrarily, as in this Case he is under no *Restraint*; so he must be perfectly at *Liberty* to *deceive* his Creatures, whenever he pleases; and consequently, the Foundation of *Certainty*, with regard to *Revelation Evidence*, is taken away upon this Principle. And this leads me to put to those Men their own Question; which I will leave to them to answer: What, has not God a *Right* to do, what he will with his *own*? which is the same, as to say, May he not *deceive* his *own* Creatures, if he pleases!

BUT I persuade my self, that the greatest *Advocates* for Arbitrariness in God will not allow that he is *equally* disposed to reveal the *Truth* or a *Lye*; and that he does either of these at *Pleasure*: but, on the contrary, they will be ready to affirm, that *the Supreme Being*

is a God of Truth, who cannot lye; and therefore is the *proper Object* of their Trust. Which, if there be any meaning or consistency in their Words, is the same as to say, that *Truth* in the present Case, is so *preferable* to *Deceit* and *Falshood*; that God cannot but be disposed, from the *Reason* of the thing, to prefer the former before the latter, and to govern his Actions accordingly. But then,

I M U S T take the Freedom to turn their Argument upon them; by observing, that, if God is always disposed to reveal the Truth from the *moral Fitness* of such a *Conduct*, and therefore is the proper Object of our Confidence: Then, I say, with equal Reason, that he acts *agreeably* to the moral Fitness of Things in *every* other Case; because the Reason holds as *strong*, and therefore will have as great an *Influence* upon him to direct his Practice in one Case as in another. And consequently, he will be as much disposed, from the *Reason* of the Thing, to do what is right and fit in *every* Case; as he is to *reveal* the *Truth* in any *Declaration* or *Promise* he makes to his Creatures.

I F it should be urged, allowing that God does make the moral Fitness of Things the Measure of his Actions in all those Cases in which that Fitness can be a Rule to him; yet seeing Men are liable to make a *wrong* Judgment, therefore it must be *right* to submit to every divine Command, because the Command would not be given if there were
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not an *antecedent Fitness* in the thing commanded ; and that this was the Case of *Abraham* when he was required to offer his Son in Sacrifice, in which Case *Abraham* could not see the *Fitness* of such an Action, because it had the *appearance* of the contrary.

I ANSWER, As God sees thro and to the end of things, and thereby has a perfect View of all the Circumstances and Consequences which attend our Actions ; so he must see wherein the Fitness or Unfitness of every Action lies, and consequently must be a much better Judge in many Cases than Man can possibly be, whose Views are vastly contracted. And,

THEREFORE, I say, that in all those Cases in which there is no *apparent Unfitness*, and where we are satisfied of the *Divinity* of the Command, there this will be a *Reason* for our Compliance : and if we should be under a Delusion in judging the Command to be Divine, when in reality it is not, yet the Delusion would not be hurtful. But,

IF the thing commanded *appears to us* morally unfit, then there is not any thing which can give us a *reasonable* Satisfaction that the Commandment is *Divine*, because here is the highest Presumption to the *contrary*. It is not enough to say in this Case, that our Judgment ought to *submit* to the infallible Judgment of God, with regard to the Fitness of the Thing commanded, because that would be to take the

the Thing for *granted* which is in dispute ; the present Question not being whether our Judgment ought to come in *Competition* with the Judgment of our Maker, but only whether the *Command* in question is of a divine Original or not.

BESIDES, if our Judgment of the Fitness of Things is to be left out of the Case, then we are laid open to the most *hurtful* and *ridiculous* Impositions. For if we should urge the Cruelty and Barbarity and the like of any Institution, as an Argument against its *Divinity*, the same Answer may be as justly returned in every Case; namely, that tho these may *appear* morally unfit to us, yet it may be *otherwise* with regard to God, and that therefore we ought to *submit* our Judgment to the Judgment of our Maker.

TO this I may add, that if such a Case should happen as, that the thing commanded has the *appearance* of unfitness, when in reality it is *otherwise*, every wise and good Governor will do all that is necessary to *secure* Obedience, and consequently will give the *Reason* of the Command as well as the Command itself, and thereby cut off that *Exception* against Obedience, which otherwise the Command would be liable to. And, as God can have no End to answer in giving such Commands, but purely the *Good* and *Benefit* of his Creatures ; so he will most certainly not only give the Command, but also re-

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veal the Reason, and shew the *Fitness* of it: Seeing this is absolutely necessary to cut off all *Disputes*, which otherwise may justly arise whether the Command is *Divine* or not.

A S to the Case of *Abraham*, I think (with Submission) that the Thing commanded, was in itself *morally unfit*, and that God gave the Command not with an Intent that it should be obeyed, but that he might take an occasion from it, to shew to *Abraham* and to all his Posterity, the *unfitness* of all human *Sacrifices*. And that this was the Case, is, I think, evident from the Event. For as the Command was given to *Abraham* to be a trial of his Integrity, so when that End was answer'd, and *Abraham* had shewn a steady Resolution that he would deny himself in so signal an Instance, rather than neglect to do what he judged to be his Duty; then God recalled the Command, and thereby testified his *dislike*, and shewed the *unfitness* of all such *Practices*.

BUT that I may go to the bottom of all, and thereby remove what may be a *Foundation* for Objection, in the present Case; I beg leave to observe, that Government, properly so called, or Government, whose *Fitness* is founded in the Nature of Things, is no other than the Exercise of Power, for the *Benefit* of those that are governed: And Governors are no other than *Guardians* of the

the *Happiness* of those they are Governors to. So that if those who have the reins of Government in their hands, imploy their Power otherwise than for the good of those they have under their Care, this is the *abuse* of Power; this is *Tyranny*, and not Government, strictly speaking: and all Instances of mere *Sovereignty*, that is of Power, shewn for the sake of shewing it, and not for the good of those who are subjected to it; I say, all such Instances are Manifestations not of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, but of the *Weakness* and *Vanity* of the Legislator.

THE Case is the same, whether we consider Government as exercised by a *Divine* or a *Human* Person; only with this Difference, that if we consider Power as misapplied, when in a divine Hand, it has this to *aggravate* the Case; namely, that it was done without any *Temptation* to it: whereas Men are sometimes under a *Temptation* to *misapply* their Power, as aforesaid. But we have this for our Consolation, that God will not imploy his governing Power *childishly* or *hurtfully*, but rightly, to answer the Purposes of a *wise* and *good* Government.

It is true, God is our *Creator*, who has called us into Being; and our continuing to be, and to be what we are, is owing to his good Pleasure. But then it is to be remembered, that our *Obligations* to God arise not from his being barely and simply our *Creator*,

but from his being a *kind* Creator to us. Barely to be, is no *Favour*, and consequently can lay no *Obligation* : but to Be, to our *Advantage*, that is a Favour which calls for our Acknowledgment, and obliges us to walk worthy of it, and to make a Return of Favour again, if the Case will admit it, and requires it; which here it does not.

G O D's being our *Creator*, cannot possibly give him a right to exercise his Dominion over us *unreasonably*, and to our *hurt*, (I say, and to our hurt, except our *Demerit* renders us the proper Objects of his *Displeasure*) it being altogether as unreasonable, and unfit, in the Nature of the Thing, for God to act *arbitrarily* or *disagreeably* with his Creatures, as it is for those Creatures to deal thus one with another. God's calling us into being, without our *Consent*, does indeed render it fit, in the nature of the Thing, that he should make a *Provision* for our *well-being*, as we are Creatures capable of Happiness, and of the contrary : and as one or other of these must be our Case ; because to Be in *such* a state would be a *Hardship* and an *Injury* to us, without a Provision for our well-being, which Provision (to our *Comfort*, and to our *Creator's Praise*) he has *plentifully* made for his Creatures.

T H E Duty that we owe to God and to our fellow Creatures arises from our being *constituted, circumstanced and related* as we are;

are ; and the doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things. This becomes a *Rule* and *Law* to us, not as we are Creatures, but as we are *intelligent Beings* ; that is, as we are qualified to discern the moral Difference betwixt good and evil, and to direct our Actions accordingly. For tho God is the *Author* of our Nature, and of those Relations we stand in to him and to each other, yet when a Creature is *thus* constituted and *thus* related ; the Duty, which he is in *Reason* obliged to, will *necessarily* and *unavoidably* arise from his *Composition* and his *Relations* as aforesaid. And this will always be the Case ; that is, it will be eternally fit, in the nature of the Thing, for a Creature constituted and related as Man is, to act a Part *fitable* to and *becoming* human Nature. I say, this will always be his Duty, whether God interposes by a Revelation, and gives any Commandment concerning it, or not. And,

AS the doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things, becomes a Rule and Law to us, as we are intelligent Beings ; so, in the Nature of the Thing, it is a *Rule* to God, if I may so speak, that is, it is *equally* as fit that God should act *agreeably* to this Rule, as any other intelligent Being whatsoever. And, consequently, as this will always be the Measure of God's Actions, so he will *approve* or *disapprove* of the Actions of his
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intelligent Creatures, as they are *agreeable* with, or *contrary* to, this Rule. So that the *Ground* or *Reason* why God is pleased with one Action, and displeased with another, is not because one is done in *Obedience* to a divine *Command*, and another is not; but because the Actions themselves are the *proper Objects* of his Approbation or Dislike. For, as the *valuableness* of every *Command* arises from the *good Purposes* it is made subservient to; so the *valuableness* of *Obedience* must *spring* from the same Root. To do a thing merely because it is commanded, as there is not any thing *valuable* in the Action, so it, reflects *Dishonour* upon the Legislator; because it supposes that the Action would not be done, were it not to *gratify* such a Humourist.

IF *Abraham* had sacrificed his Son, in *Obedience* to the divine *Command*, (which, as I observed above, God never intended he should, but the contrary, by shewing his dislike of all such Practices;) in such a Case, tho the Simplicity, Honesty and Integrity of *Abraham* would have been *commendable*; yet the Action it self would have been *abominable* both in the Eyes of *God* and *Man*, as it was an Instance of Cruelty, for a Father to imbrue his Hands in the Blood of his *own Son*, when that Son had not done any thing, which made him forfeit his Title to his *Father's Protection*, much less to forfeit his
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Life: and, as it bespoke the Being, to whom the Sacrifice was offered, to be of an *evil Disposition*; because the Action supposes that he either *delighted* in, or that his *Resentment* was *removed*, by such an Instance of Barbarity. If it should be said that the Action would have been *sanctified* by the divine Command, which would have been the *Ground* or *Reason* of it: I answer, if it was an evil Action, *antecedent* to the Command, it must be so *after* it; because the divine Command cannot possibly *alter* the Nature of Things, and make a Fact good which in the Nature of the Thing is evil.

IN fine, no one can, in the nature of the Thing, have a Right of Dominion over us, any further than to rule us for our *good*; as I observed above: and therefore the true *Ground* of all Subjection, whether it be to human or to divine Authority, is, that the Government is exercised for the *common Tranquillity*.

HAVING consider'd the first Proposition, and what has been urged in its Defence; I proceed to

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PROPOSITION II.

The true Religion, or that which is the Ground of divine Acceptance, does consist in doing what is right and fit, in the Nature of Things; yet it does not consist in this alone, but also in our complying with those Forms of Worship, which are of divine Institution. So that tho we do the former, yet we shall not be acceptable to God, except we perform the latter.

THE Difficulties, if there are any, which may arise from this Proposition, I imagine will be removed by what I shall say in the following Observations. And,

FIRST, I observe, that the Term *Worship* is used, to signify something *external*, either *Words* or *Actions*. And these *Words* or *Actions* are used, to express the inward *Respect* and *Value* that one Person has for another. And accordingly, when Men are said to *worship* God, they are supposed to perform something *external*, by which they express the Sense they have of the *Excellency* and *Valuableness* of their *Maker*. This I take to be the common, plain, and intelligible Sense of the Term *Worship*. Again,

I OBSERVE, secondly, that no *Action*, which is *ridiculous* in itself, or that is *hurtful* to Mankind, can, in the Nature of the Thing, be an Act of *Worship* when *commanded*.

manded. For, tho Compliance with such a Command, is an Instance of *Subjection*; yet it cannot be a mark of *Respect*; because it sets forth not the *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, but the *Weakness* or *Unreasonableness* of the Legislator.

For Example; suppose a People should be required by their Governor to repair to a particular Place at a particular time, and there to stand on their *Heads*, or to *cut* and *wound* their Bodys. In this Case, Compliance with such Commands cannot possibly express the inward Sense, which the Action has of the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the Legislator, because the Action itself naturally and unavoidably expresses the *contrary*: that is, in one Instance it plainly shews the Legislator to be *weak* and *childish*, and in the other that he *unreasonably* applies his Authority to the *Hurt* and *Damage* of his Subjects. But this surely cannot be the Case with respect to God; who, as he always directs his Actions by the Rules of *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, so he will not apply his Authority *childishly* or *unreasonably*, as aforesaid: much less will he make Compliance with such Laws, the *Ground* of *divine Acceptance*; because that would be to *approve* of what is really *disagreeable*. And,

IF a Person should unhappily fall under a Government, where such Laws take place as aforesaid; and, if some much greater evil attends his *non-Compliance* with such Laws:

In such a Case, tho there is no *Reason* for Compliance arising from the thing commanded, but plainly a Reason against it; nor yet from the Authority of the Lawgiver, seeing no one can have a *Right* in the Nature of the Thing to command what is *unreasonable* in itself: yet Compliance would be right; because when two Evils present themselves, and one or other of them must of necessity be *submitted* to, then it is right and fit, in the Nature of things, that we should chuse the least. Again,

I O B S E R V E, thirdly, that, if there are any Words or Actions which are in themselves *natural* Marks of Respect; and, if we worship God in the use of these, this is doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things; whether such Forms of Worship are of *divine* Institution or not. And, consequently, these do not come into the *present Question*: because the Forms of Worship, mentioned in the Proposition, are considered as *over* and *above* what is right and fit in the Nature of Things; and therefore cannot be considered as such. Again,

I O B S E R V E, fourthly, that the Forms of Worship, which I think properly come into the present Question, are such external Words and Actions, as are *not* in themselves *natural* Marks of Respect or Disrespect; but are capable of being made *one* or the *other*, either by *Custom*, by *human*, or by *divine Authority*.
F O R

FOR Example, suppose *bowing* the *Body* towards the *East*, or towards a *carved Image*, are Actions which in themselves are not natural Marks of Respect, nor Disrespect; and that no *ill* Consequence was likely to attend the use of one, more than the other. And, suppose God (to prevent Contention and Discord, and to keep Mankind in Unity amongst themselves) should kindly interpose, and require Men to worship or pay their Respect to him in the use of one or other of those Actions before-mentioned. In this Case the Question will be; whether there is a moral Fitness, or not, in our complying with such a Command. If there is; then this likewise falls within the Definition, which I have given of true Religion, *viz.* it is doing what is right and fit in the Nature of Things. Now,

IN order to judge aright of the Fitness or Unfitness of such an Action, all *Circumstances* and *Consequences* which stand related to it, must be taken into the Case; as I observed above. If there are no Circumstances attending it, nor any Consequences following upon it, which render the Action unfit, then I think with submission, that there is a moral Fitness in our *complying* with such a *Law*; as it is a submitting to the Pleasure of one, who watches over us for our *good*; and, as it contributes to *Peace* and *Unity* amongst Mankind. But,

IF our Lot should be cast amongst Men who do not believe this Form of Worship to be of *divine* Institution, and who set up another Form of Worship in *Distinction* from and in *Opposition* to it; and if our Compliance with the divine Command introduces *Misery* to our selves and *Confusion* to the Publick; in such a Case that Compliance would, in the Nature of the Thing, be perfectly *wrong*; because it would be the preferring a thing, which was in it self *indifferent*, to the *Happiness* of our own *Life* and the *Peace* of the *Publick*, which are certainly more *valuable*.

IF it should be urged, that God expects our Compliance with such his Commands; tho they are attended with those or the like Circumstances and Consequences, as aforesaid.

I ANSWER. This is not only begging the Question; but it is likewise a breaking in upon the *spotless Character* of our heavenly Father, by representing him not as a *wise* and *good*, but as a *peevish* and *ill-natur'd* Being; as one, who takes up an *unreasonable* Resentment at the *prudent* Conduct of his Children. And for the better illustration of this Point, I beg leave to relate the following Story.

A M A N who liv'd at *Salisbury*, had two Sons, living in *London*. And he, being desirous of seeing them, wrote a Letter, and ordered them to come to him at such a time. And that they might afford Assistance, Protection, and Comfort to each other in their
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Journey ; he ordered them to come home together. Now there being two Roads from *London* to *Salisbury* ; the one by the way of *Andover*, and the other by the way of *Winchester* ; and these Roads being indifferent in themselves with regard to the *ease* and *safety* of Travellers, when the Father wrote his Letter : he therefore, to prevent any *Contention* and *Discord* that might arise betwixt his Sons about which Road they should take, gave it in Charge, that they should come by the way of *Winchester*. But before the time was expired for the Sons to take their Journey according to the appointment of their Father, there hapned to fall an abundance of Rain ; which filled the ways with Water, and swelled the Rivers to such a Degree, as rendered their travelling the Road by the way of *Winchester* exceeding *hazardous* of their *Lives*. Now, this being the Case, the Question will be ; how the Sons ought in *reason* to act ; and what a *wise* and a *kind* Father could reasonably expect from them.

THE elder Son tenaciously adhered to the Command of his Father ; and thought it was right that he should run all *Hazards*, rather than act contrary to what he judged to be his *Duty* ; *Obedience* to his Father's Command in the present Case, he esteeming to be such. But the younger thought otherwise. And accordingly, he took the liberty to reason the Case with his Brother after this manner.

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OUR Father (said he) gave this Commandment to us, not out of *capricious Humour*, and to answer no *good End*; much less hereby, to lay a *Trap* for our *Lives*: but, on the contrary, he intended it for our *good*, by cutting off all occasion for *Contention* betwixt us, that otherwise might have arisen, about which way we should take. And, seeing his End in giving this Command, is as well answered by our going to *Salisbury* by the way of *Andover* as by the way of *Winchester*; and seeing we cannot take the latter Road, without the utmost *hazard* of our *Lives*: it must, therefore, be highly *reasonable* in it self, and most *acceptable* to our Father, that we act *contrary* to his Command in this Particular; as the Circumstances of things now stand.

BESIDES, said he, if we follow the Command in the present Case; it must highly reflect upon the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of our Father; because this supposes, that he prefers a *Trifle* to the *Safety* and *Lives* of his *Children*; which surely we can have no Reason to think. But tho the younger thus reasoned the Case; yet it did not work Conviction in the elder Brother: he still concluding, that such Reasoning and such a Conduct did favour more of *Policy* and *worldly Wisdom* than of *Duty* and *Obedience*; the latter, in his Opinion, being vastly preferable to the former. The elder Brother, being thus resolv'd

solv'd to adhere strictly to the *Letter* of his Father's Command, took his Journey towards *Salisbury* by the way of *Winchester*: which proved very *fatal* to him; for it unhappily issued in his *Death*. And this gave occasion for different Reflections: some Men judging that he had given an Instance of great *Weakness*, and that he had *trifled* away his *Life*; but others thought the contrary, concluding that hereby he had given an Instance of great *Virtue*, by his thus gloriously suffering *Martyrdom* for the sake of his *Duty*, and to keep a good *Conscience*.

THE younger Brother set out for *Salisbury* by the way of *Andover*. And, as he came home in *Safety*; so he had no sooner come to his Father, and had given him an account of his and his Brother's separation from each other; but the dead Corps of his elder Brother was likewise brought home: the sight of which threw their Father into the utmost Confusion. But,

WHEN he had recover'd himself, and had reduced his Passion to Reason; he beheld his dead Son, and wept over him. He much commended his *Honesty* and *Integrity*; in that he would hazard his Life, rather than do a thing which appeared to him to be *wrong*. He pitied his *Weakness*, and lamented his *Misfortune*. And, turning himself to his younger Son, he *rejoiced* and was *comforted*; admiring and approving of the *justness* of his *Reasoning*,
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and the *Prudence* of his *Conduct*: looking upon both, as the happy means of preserving his own Life. For, as he gave the Commandment purely out of *Kindness*, and for his Childrens *Good*; so he judged, that if it had proved the unhappy Occasion of both their Deaths, it would have brought down his gray Hairs with Sorrow to the Grave.

THUS ends my Story: and I think the Cases are parallel (so far as one is necessary to illustrate the other) and the Application is easy.

IF it should be urged; that this reflects sadly upon the *Conduct* of the *Apostles* of Christ; who ran all *Hazards*, and laid down their *Lives* for the sake of the Gospel.

I ANSWER. The Case of the Apostles was in no wise parallel to the Case before us. They were commanded to publish to the World the Doctrine of *Repentance*, and *Remission* of *Sins*; that is, they were sent forth to convince Mankind, that as their Sin and Wickedness exposed them to *divine Displeasure*; so their Repentance and Reformation would recommend them to *Mercy*. And as these are Truths, in which the *Honour* of God and the *Happiness* of Mankind, as to this World and that to come, are nearly concern'd; so they were in the Nature of the thing, worthy of the Apostles *Labours* to propagate them, and of their *Lives* to maintain them. But,

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THO the Apostles were ready to spend and be spent in order to propagate and defend the Truths before mention'd, and the heavenly Character of Him from whom they received them; yet their *Judgment* and *Conduct*, with regard to *Ceremonys*, was quite otherwise. With them Circumcision (that is, the use of Ceremonies) was nothing: and Uncircumcision (that is, the neglect of Ceremonies) was nothing; but as the Circumstances of Things rendred the use, or the neglect of these, for the good and benefit of Mankind. And thus St. *Paul* took and circumcised *Timothy*, to prevent the unreasonable Resentment of the *Jews*. And thus, he neglected to baptize the *Corinthians*, (tho Baptism was inserted in the Apostolical Commission) that hereby he might prevent his being esteemed the Head of a Party, and the evil Consequences which might follow upon it. Again,

I OBSERVE fifthly, that tho the Circumstances and Consequences which attend our Compliance with those Forms of Worship which are of divine Institution, does render that Compliance fit and proper in the Nature of Things: yet, I think, Compliance cannot be so far the *Ground* of *divine Acceptance*; as that our non-Compliance, in such a Case, would be a *Bar* to that Acceptance. For as on the one side, all Men, who are disposed to worship God, will be led, from the Nature of the Thing, to do it in that way,

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in which they think it will be *best* accepted; so on the other side, if a Person should think it *right*, and accordingly *drops* a Ceremony of divine Institution, when the Circumstances of Things render it proper to be preserved and used; or if he should *use* or *plead* for the use of such a Ceremony, when the Circumstances of things render it fit to be *neglected*, and to be *silent* about it: as such a Conduct is the effect of a *mistaken Judgment* only, and not of a *vitious Mind*; so it cannot be a proper Foundation for *Resentment*, and consequently can be no *Bar* to *divine* Acceptance.

THE Sum of the matter is this: If God is in reality a wise and good Being, which surely none will be so hardy as to deny; then it will follow, that in all his Dealings with his Creatures, he will act a Part *fitable* to, and *becoming* such a Character.

THUS, Sir, I have laid before you the above Observations; in order to remove every Difficulty which might arise from the second Proposition. And here I should have ended my Letter; were it not for some other *Complaints* which my *Previous Question* has occasioned; and which it may be expected I should take notice of. And these are two; namely *first*, that the Terms *moral Fitness* and *Unfitness* do not *clearly* express the *Ideas* which I annex to them; and, *secondly*, that I am *pleading* the Cause of *Infidelity*.

A S

A S to the first I observe; that the Distinctions of *Good* and *Evil* arise from, and are founded in, the *Nature* and the *Relations* of Things: And those are usually distinguished into two Sorts, *viz. natural* and *moral*. By natural good, I mean that, which gives *Pleasure* and *Delight*; so as that the Being, which enjoys it, may be truly said to be *happy* in and by that Injoyment. And, by natural Evil, I mean that, which gives *Uneasiness* and *Grief*; so as that the Being, which suffers it, may be truly said to be *unhappy* or *miserable*. And,

A S these are plainly distinct and different in Nature: so one of them, necessarily and unavoidably, becomes the Object of our *Approbation* and *Pursuit*; and the other of our *Aversion* and *Shunning*. For, tho natural Good may be shunned, and natural Evil may be chosen, in some Instances: yet, in these Cases, they are not shunned or chosen for their own Sakes; but upon the account of some other Good or Evil, they stand related to. Thus we shun the Injoyment of Good; when that Injoyment is either a *Bar* to some *greater* Good to our selves, or others; or when it is *introductive* of some *greater* Evil to our selves, or others: or at least, when we judge that to be the Case. And thus we chuse natural Evil, when under the like Circumstances, but never for its own sake. And,

A S these are differently the Objects of our Approbation and Aversion; so they are ca-

Pable of being *communicated*: that is, one Being is capable of *giving* or *contributing* to the Happiness or Misery of another, and that too (as they are the Subjects of a *free Choice*) when it is in his Power, and he is at Liberty, either to *suspend* the Exercise of that Ability, or to *exert* it; by giving or contributing to the Happiness of another, or by giving or contributing to the contrary. And,

A S Happiness and Misery are capable of being communicated; so it is in the Use and Exercise of that *Capacity*, that *moral Good* and *Evil* consists. When it is *rightly* used to the *Production* of *Happiness*, that constitutes moral Good; and when it is *abused* to the *Production* of *Misery*, that constitutes moral Evil: supposing the Subject, in which that Capacity resides, is qualify'd to *discern* that one of these is a *right*, and the other a *wrong* Application of such Power. I say, that one of these is a right, and the other a wrong Application of that Power. For,

A S we cannot but be convinced, from the Nature of the Thing, that Happiness is *preferable* to Misery; and that this must be the Case, with regard to all who are capable of either: so the *communicating* of one of these, must be *preferable* to the other also. That is, we cannot but be convinced from the nature of the Thing, that the communicating that to another, which is equally the Object of all our Approbation and Liking, is *right* and *good*:
and

and that the communicating that to another, which is equally the Object of all our Aversion and Dislike, is *wrong* and *evil*.

I SHALL not here enter into the Question; whether *personal Viciousness* may not render a Being the *proper* Object of *Misery*. I only consider Happiness and Misery *abstractedly*, from any *Merit* or *Demerit*, which they may be *related* to; and which may be the *Ground* of them. And, when they are thus abstractedly consider'd; then, I say, the communicating of Happiness is an Action, which, in the nature of the Thing, is *worthy* and *agreeable*; and which *approves* it self to our Understandings; and the communicating of Misery is an Action, which, in the nature of the Thing, is *base* and *disagreeable*, and which our Understandings cannot but *disapprove*. For, let but a Person consider *himself*, as made *miserable* by *another*, and he will instantly see, that the other has acted a *disingenuous* and *disagreeable* Part by him. And let him turn the Tables, and consider *himself*, as giving *Misery* to *another*; and then he will likewise unavoidably see, that it must, in the nature of the Thing, be equally as *base* and *vile* for him to make *another* miserable, as it is for that other to make *him* so. And, on the other side, let but a Man consider *himself*, as made *happy* by *another*; and then he will see, that the other has acted a Part, which, in the nature of the Thing, is really *honourable* and *praise-worthy*. And, let him

him turn the Tables, and consider *himself* as giving *Happiness* to *another*; and, then he cannot but see the Action in the same Light. It will unavoidably appear to him as *reasonable* and as *agreeable*, that he should communicate Happiness to another, as that he should receive Happiness from him. But farther, I observe, that natural Good, and natural Evil comes under a two-fold Consideration, namely, *publick* and *private*. Publick Good is the Good of a *Whole*, and private Good is the Good of a *Part* of that Whole: When the Good of the Part is *distinct* from, and stands *opposed* to the Good of the Whole; publick and private Evil is defined after the same manner. And,

A S Good is, in the nature of the Thing, preferable to Evil, so *publick* Good is likewise *preferable* to *private* Good, when this comes in competition. For, when the Case so stands, as that the Good of an Individual, and the Good of the Whole, must of necessity, one or other of them, give place to the other; then every Man's Understanding convinces him, that the *lesser* Good ought in *reason* to give place to the *greater*; and that it is really *better*, in the nature of the Thing, that one Man should be *denied*, or that he should *deny himself* Pleasure, for the *sake* of the *Whole*; than, that the Whole should be *denied* for the *sake* of *One*. The case is the same with regard to publick and private Evil. And,

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FROM hence arises the Distinction; which I have made betwixt *moral Fitness* and *Unfitness*: the Terms arising from the *right* and the *wrong* Application of that *Power*, which is lodged in every intelligent Being, to *communicate* Happiness or Misery, as aforesaid. So that an Action is morally good, or morally evil; and thereby becomes morally fit or unfit to be performed, as it is productive of, or some way or other stands related to, one or other of these.

IN all Cases, when publick Good and Evil does not come into the Question; there it is morally fit to *communicate Happiness*, and morally unfit to *communicate Misery*. If Happiness and Happiness come in competition; then it is morally fit to *prefer* the *greater* to the *less*. And if Misery and Misery come in competition; then it is morally fit to *prefer* the *less* to the *greater*. I shall not enter into every Question, which the Subject may be liable to; such as when a Man's own Happiness or Misery comes into competition with the Happiness and Misery of another; or when the Happiness or Misery of two others comes in competition; and the like. Every Man's Understanding will inform him, wherein the moral Fitness or Unfitness of every such Action does consist; when he has taken the *Relations* and *Circumstances* of the *Persons* and *Actions* into the Case. But,

IF the Question relates to publick Good, and Evil; then, I say, every Action, which upon the *whole* (taking in all *Circumstances* and *Consequences*) tends to and is productive of the *common Felicity*, is right and fit in the Nature of Things: And this Fitness I call moral. And every Action, which upon the *whole* is *hurtful* to *Mankind*, is morally evil. And,

FORASMUCH as Man is capable of making a wrong Judgment in the present Case; he not being always *apprized* of the Circumstances, which attend an Action, or the Consequences that follow it: Therefore, I say, that every Action, which is *directed* and *intended* to *introduce Happiness*, or for the *common Good*, is a vertuous Action, whether it introduces what was intended by it or not: and every Action, which is *directed* and *intended* to *introduce Misery*, or for the *common Hurt*; or which is performed at the *apparent Hazard* of the *Happiness* of others, or the *common Felicity*; every such Action is evil and vitious. So that

VIRTUE does not consist, as some have imagined, in *running cross* to *Nature*, by preferring Misery to Happiness; but in a *generous* Prosecution of the Happiness of *others*; and in denying our selves for the sake of *others*, and for the *common Tranquillity*. Neither does Vice consist in *following Nature*, by preferring Happiness to Misery: but in a *selfish*

selfish monopolizing Happiness to our selves; and in prosecuting our own Pleasures and Desires, when they are *inconsistent* with or *destructive* of the Happiness of others, or of the *common Felicity*.

I AM sensible that there are two Cases with regard to moral Fitnels and Unfitness, which at first sight may seem to have no Relation to, or be founded upon the Principles I have here laid down, *viz.* the making a *grateful Acknowledgment* of a Favour received, and the shewing *Resentment* for an Injury done when a proper occasion offers. But I persuade my self, that every Man, who carefully examines the Case, will see, that the forementioned Principles are the Ground and Reason of each of these. For if the communicating of Happiness was not *right* and *fit* in itself, there could be no *Foundation* for Gratitude. That is, if there were not something, really valuable in the Action; then there could not be any thing *worthy* of our Acknowledgment. So that the Fitness of the latter, has an apparent Dependance upon the Fitness of the former. And on the other side, if the communicating of Unhappiness were not in the Nature of the Thing really *unfit*; then there could be no *Reason* or *Ground* for our Resentment: And consequently, the latter of these necessarily supposes the former, and is founded upon it. And,

THO God is the Author of *Nature*, and of those *Relations* which Things stand in one

to another ; yet when Things are thus constituted and thus related, Good and Evil will *necessarily* and *unavoidably* arise from the Nature and from the Relations of the Things themselves, and not from the arbitrary Will and Pleasure of their Maker. Thus Pain will be *evil* and *afflictive*; even tho God should determine and declare the contrary. His Determination cannot possibly convince us, that Pain is *pleasant*; because we experimentally *feel* and *know* the contrary. And thus the communicating of Happiness will, in the Nature of the Thing, be really valuable in itself, and highly preferable to the communicating of Misery ; whether God determines any thing concerning it, or not.

HAVING thus remov'd what gave occasion for the first Complaint, by stating the Notion of the Terms beforementioned; I now proceed to the

SECOND, namely, that I have been *pleading* the Cause of *Infidelity*; by which I suppose is meant Infidelity with regard to the *Christian* Revelation. But surely this Complaint is as *unkind*, as it is *groundless*. And all that, I think, is needful for me to say, in the present Case, is to request of the Complainers, to consider what a *Complement* they hereby pay the Christian Religion, by thus representing it as an *arbitrary Institution*; given by God, not out of *Kindness* to Mankind, but as an Instance of his *absolute Sovereignty* and *Dominion* over them : which must be the Case, if
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what I have said in my *Previous Question*, is *injurious* to the Christian Religion. And,

THUS much, I think, I may venture farther to say; that whether the present Complaint against me is just or not, yet the giving such a *Representation* of the Christian Religion as aforesaid, is most certainly *paving* the way to *Infidelity*. Tho I persuade my self, that there is not any thing, which can strictly and properly be called the *Christian Religion*; but which may be shewn to be the Effect of *Wisdom* and *Goodness*, and not of *capricious Humour* and *arbitrary Pleasure*.

THE *Christian Revelation* gives us the most *beautiful Representation* of God, with regard to his *moral Character*: It sets him forth as the *Fountain of Wisdom* and *Goodness*; as the *Father of Mercys*, and the *God of all Consolations*; yea, as *Love* it self. And this leads me to enquire; what it is, that must constitute such a Character; and wherein each of these consists. Does not *Wisdom* and *Goodness* consist in a *right Application* of *Knowledge* and *Power*? Surely God is not *wise*, because he is *knowing*; neither is he *good*, because he is *powerful*: but he is both *wise* and *good* in the *right Exercise* of these; that is, as he applies his *Knowledge* and *Power* rightly in serving the *best of Purposes*: namely *Kindness*, and *Benevolence*. He is both *wise* and *good*, in calling a multitude of *Creatures* into Being capable of *Happiness*; and in a plentiful Provision of all Things, *necessary* to

make them so. He is merciful and loving ; in that he shews the most tender Regard to the *Happiness* and *Well-being* of his Creatures. And,

I S this the Case ? Then surely it must be most monstrous to suppose, that what I have said in my *Previous Question*, is *injurious* to the Christian Religion ; seeing all that I have said, is no more than the *asserting* and *maintaining* God's *moral* Character, as aforesaid. And therefore, I desire it may be considered ; whether such a Representation of me, be not *injurious* to the *Christian Religion* : because it considers the Christian Revelation, as a *Contradiction* to *itself* ; by representing it as an Institution, which is inconsistent with the Character it gives of that Being, whom it claims for its Author.

I T is true, the religious *Schemes* of Christians are too often *mixed* and *compounded* of such *Contradictions*, as aforesaid. For in them Men are led to make a *general* acknowledgment of the Wisdom and Goodness of God ; when the *Particulars* of those Schemes plainly represent him to be otherwise. But, I presume, this cannot be *justly* charged upon Christianity itself ; and therefore I would desire those Men, when they *interpret* the Christian Revelation, to take the *Nature* and the *Fitness of Things* into the Case ; or else they will be in danger of offering *Violence* to the *moral* Character of our *heavenly Father*.

I F Men would but consult the *Nature* and *Reason* of Things, in their Inquiries concern-
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ing the *Propertys* and *Conduct* of the Almighty ; it would prevent them from raising all those *false* and *unworthy* Images of God, which are too frequently pictured in their Minds. Men are apt to form their Conceptions of God and of his *Actions*, from what they see *grand* and *magisterial* in the *Princes* and *Potestates* of the *Earth* ; only with this Difference : In Men they consider it, as *limited* and *finite* ; but when they carry their Thoughts to God, they consider it in him, as *boundless* and *infinite*.

THAT *Pomp*, that *Arbitrariness*, that *Resentment*, that *insatiable Revenge*, that *Contempt*, &c. which some earthly Monarchs put on ; and which command the *Fears*, the *humble Addresses*, the *fulsome Flatteries*, and the *slavish Submission* of those that are under them : This is that *Glass*, which Men look thro when they take a *View* of their Creator. And this has led them, not to change the *Glory* of the *incorruptible God* into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and four-footed Beasts and creeping Things ; but into that, which is much worse, namely into the *Likeness* and *Similitude* of an *evil Spirit* : That is, Men have represented God, as under the Influence of *evil* and *vicious* Affections ; such as *Cruelty*, *insatiable Revenge*, &c. which is the *true Picture* of an *evil Spirit*.

S T. P A U L told the *Corinthians*, 1 Epist. Chap. 10. v. 20. That *the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to Devils, and*
not

not to God. That is, the *Gentiles* by their Sacrifices *addressed* themselves to Beings (real or fictitious) which they apprehended to be under the Power of *evil Affections*; and so they sacrificed to Devils. And well had it been, if this could have been charged *only* on the *Gentiles*. But alas! some *Christians* have drawn such a Picture of the *Deity*, as makes him *resemble* the *chiefest of Devils*. They have represented God, as calling a Multitude of Creatures into Being, *on purpose* to make them *miserable*. And that he might have a *Colour* of doing *Justice* in the Case, they consider him as placing those Creatures in such a state, as that they must *necessarily transgress*; and then *punishing* them *eternally* for that Transgression: than which, I think, nothing can be more *cruel* and *barbarous*; it being far worse, than what is commonly charged upon the *Devil himself*. The Devil is usually represented, as *tempting* Men to that which exposes them to divine Displeasure. And so he endeavours to make them *miserable*; but leaves it at their *Choice* whether they will *follow* his Temptations or *not*: whereas God is considered as *ordaining* to *Misery*, *antecedent* to Men's *Choice*. And,

THO these and the like religious Principles reflect *great Dishonour* upon God with regard to his *moral* Character, yet the Men of these Principles pretend to have the *highest Zeal* for his Honour and Glory. And accordingly, if they can find a Person, who they think has taken up *false* Notions of the
Deity,

Deity, with regard to his *natural* Character; namely his natural *Propertys*, his *Personality*, and the like: then they open their Mouths like a Trumpet to proclaim such a one's *great Wickedness*, as they are pleased to call it; and charge him with *Blasphemy*, and with doing the *greatest Dishonour* to his Maker: not considering that the Dishonour done to God, when considered in his *natural* Capacity, bears no Comparison with that much greater Dishonour done to him when considered in his *moral*.

SUPPOSE a Man to be of a *healthy vigorous Constitution*, and that he is really a *wise honest vertuous* Man: And suppose any one should say of him, that he is *weak and infirm* in his *Body*; and another should say, that he is a *Fool* or a *Knave*: in both Cases the Man's Character is *injur'd*; in the former in his *natural*, in the latter in his *moral* Capacity. And here, I presume, it will be allow'd by all, that the Injury done in the *former* Case bears no Comparison to the Injury done to the Man's Character in the *latter*. And yet this is the very Case with respect to God. The *Injury* done him with regard to his *natural* Character, is as it were nothing when compared with that *much greater*, which is done him in his *moral*. I shall not here aggravate the Case; but leave it to every Man's serious Consideration. And,

NOW I think, I begin to *exceed* the Bounds of a *Letter*; and to cast a *Blemish* upon my former Performance. For will not every one
be

be ready to say of my *Previous Question*, surely its *Defects* were great, if it needed so large a *Supply*? But suppose I have been faulty in making the *Supplement* larger than the *Performance*, yet I hope it is what will easily be excused; when it is considered, that this is what I am necessarily led into, in order to vindicate the moral Character of our heavenly Father. A Point, in which not only the Honour of God, but the Interest and Happiness of Mankind, are nearly concern'd. For, if God is in reality such a wise and good Being, who directs his Actions by the moral Fitness of Things, (as I think I have proved him to be) then it will follow, that as nothing but personal Vertuousness and personal Viciousness can, in the Nature of the Thing, render us the satable and proper Objects of divine Approbation or Dislike; so it must be a matter of the utmost Concern to us all, to put on such a Temper of Mind and such a Behaviour, as will render us worthy of divine Regard.

IF any thing farther should appear necessary to be said upon this Subject; I must leave it, to constitute a second Supplement to my *Previous Question*. And in the mean time I beg leave to subscribe my self,

S I R,

Your most obliged

Friend and Servant.

F I N I S.

